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Viewing cable 10ANKARA126, SECRETARY GATES' TURKEY BILATERAL VISIT:

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
10ANKARA126	2010-01-26 11:23	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Ankara

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/06/14/115798/armenian-genocide-bills-ramp-up.html>

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S E C R E T ANKARA 000126

SIPDIS

FOR BACKGROUND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/22/2020

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SUBJECT: SECRETARY GATES' TURKEY BILATERAL VISIT:
SCENESETTER

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, Reasons 1.4 (a,b,d)

¶1. (S) PM Erdogan welcomed President Obama's reiteration of support to the fight against the PKK during the December 7 meeting in the Oval Office, but the Secretary should expect questions about how we will operationalize that commitment as plans to withdraw from Iraq move forward. A key issue will be how to reduce the gap between the time when the U.S. is no longer able to provide ISR support and when we will be able to help Turkey acquire its own capability. On missile defense, we will look for the Secretary's help in advancing our work with Turkey to persuade the Turks to allow a key radar system to be based here. The Turks are struggling to define what they will need in terms of NATO political cover to lessen the high cost - both in terms of domestic politics and in relations with Iran - that Erdogan's government believes it will have to pay should they agree.

¶2. (S) Although our agenda with Turkey is broad and complex, the following issues are likely to come up during the Secretary's trip:

"Need To Raise"

- Our commitment to continue sharing real-time intelligence to support Turkey's counter-PKK fight, but caution that the process for Turkey to acquire an armed UAV system from the U.S. will be long and complex. (para 3-5, 14)
- The need for a NATO BMD system with Turkey's participation and the Iranian threat against NATO interests. (para 6-9)
- Appreciation for Turkey's efforts on Afghanistan/Pakistan, particularly for its new commitments to training security forces. (para 10-11)
- Appreciation for support to OIF/OEF through Turkey's territory, including the Incirlik Cargo Hub; easing transit of non-lethal mil cargo shipments from Iraq to Afghanistan. (para 12)
- Our advocacy support for Raytheon and Sikorsky on sales of air defense systems and utility helicopters (para 13).

"Be Ready To Respond On"

- Pressure for direct U.S. milops against the PKK (paras 5)
- Turkish requests for 24/7 Predator coverage of the Turkey-Iraq border to counter PKK operations and activities (para 5).
- Turkish requests for immediate delivery of AH-1W helicopters (para 15)

Counter - PKK Operations: Still Turkey's Top Priority

¶3. (C) Turkey's counter-terrorist efforts against the PKK have evolved in the past year and have expanded beyond military action alone. Although the government's renamed National Unity Project (initially called the "Kurdish Opening") was not fully developed when launched and appears to be moving slowly, the government has increased social and economic support to ethnic Kurds in southeast Turkey, dramatically broadened the rights of Kurds to use their own language, and increased educational opportunities as well. It is post's view that the military success against the PKK, supported by our intelligence-sharing operation, has given the civilians the political space to explore this opening and to deal directly with Masoud Barzani and other Iraqi Kurds.

Turkish military operations against the PKK continue, however, and on October 6, 2009 Parliament extended the government's mandate to conduct cross-border operations against the PKK in Iraq for another year. Turkey's leaders have learned from us and from their own experience that only

a whole-of-government approach will succeed against the PKK insurgency.

14. (C) Our November 2007 decision to share operational intelligence was a turning point for the bilateral relationship, and President Obama's declaration before the Turkish Parliament in April 2009 and during his oval office meeting with Erdogan in December 2009 of our continuing commitment to support Turkey's fight against the PKK were warmly welcomed. Our cooperation has helped to improve the bilateral relationship across the board, particularly by making it difficult for PKK terrorists to use northern Iraq as a safe haven. We can never reiterate enough our continuing commitment, as President Obama did effectively with PM Erdogan in December.

15. (C) Nevertheless, Turkish casualties are still occurring. Turkey still looks for more support, and will press us for more concrete action before the U.S. completes its withdrawal from Iraq. CHOD Basbug will likely repeat the GOT's request for laser-designation of targets and/or direct U.S. operations against the PKK. In December, PM Erdogan also asked POTUS for 24-hour Predator coverage. At present we provide approximately 12-hour coverage, with an occasional surge to 24 hours to support specific Turkish operations, such as against High Value Targets. A move to 24-hour coverage is not easy due to resources requirements elsewhere; however, we may be able to provide a few weeks of 24-hour coverage during crucial spring months, and are working with TGS to determine exactly where and when it would be most useful to do so, and what assets the Turkish military would employ if additional UAV support is made available.

Missile Defense

16. (S) The Turks asked us to postpone a return visit from Ellen Tauscher, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, as they are still considering how best to respond to our request to base an AN/TPY-2 and (potentially) other MD assets in Turkey. While some of the Turks' technical questions remain unanswered, the key questions are now political. During his meeting with President Obama, PM Erdogan said that such a system must be implemented in a NATO context to diminish the political cost that his government will likely bear, both in terms of domestic politics and in Turkey's relations with Iran. The ball is now in the court of the civilian leaders here to determine just "how much NATO" will be enough for them politically; NATO's inability to fund an "interim capability" makes it harder for us to show parallel development of a NATO BMD system with PAA. Erdogan is concerned that Turkey's participation might later give Israel protection from an Iranian counter-strike.

17. (S) We have made the point to the Turks that a decision to not base the AN/TPY-2 radar in Turkey is essentially a decision to opt out of missile defense coverage for Turkey; this would not be a political consequence, but just a fact based on physics and geometry. It is important to make this point again (gently) with PM Erdogan, but also underscore that we value Turkey's participation and will try to "NATOize" the system, if Turkey will tell us how much NATO would be enough.

18. (S) Behind all this, we fear, is a manifestation of both the Turkish government's, and to some degree the Turkish public's, growing distancing from the Atlanticist world view now that most dangers for Turkey are gone. While Turks are not naive about Iran (see below), MD places them in a pickle, forcing them to choose between the U.S./West and a Middle East "vocation" - which, while not necessarily includes

coddling Iran, requires palpable space between Turkey and "the West."

Iran

19. (S) Turkey understands and partially shares U.S. and international concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions, but is hesitant to use harsh language in public statements, in part due to its dependence on Iran as an energy supplier and as a trade route to Central Asian markets. It has worked quietly with us to prevent some proliferation-sensitive shipments to and from Iran. Turkey's top civilian and military officials may have come to the conclusion that a military strike against Iran would be more harmful for Turkey's interests than Iran gaining a nuclear weapons capability; they believe international pressure against Iran only helps to strengthen Ahmadinejad and the hard-liners. PM Erdogan himself is a particularly vocal skeptic of the U.S. position. However, Turkey did press Iran (albeit quietly) to accept the P5 plus 1 Tehran Research Reactor (TRR) offer and FM Davutoglu had been personally engaged in trying to rescue the TRR deal, which would have removed a significant portion of Iran's lowly-enriched uranium stockpile. As a current member of the UNSC, the Turks would be very hesitant to support sanctions against Iran. We need nevertheless to encourage PM Erdogan to support UN actions if Iran does not comply with Iran's international obligations while underscoring that we view Iran's program as a serious threat to NATO interests in Europe and would like to see a non-military solution (including Turkish participation in NATO BMD).

Afghanistan/Pakistan

10. (SBU) Turkey has been a dedicated partner in Afghanistan.

It has commanded ISAF twice since its inception and again took command of RC-Capital in November. Turkey leads PRT Wardak and plans to open a second PRT in Jawzjan (also covering Sar-e-Pol) in mid-2010. Turkey has sponsored the "Ankara Process" dialogue, one of several efforts to encourage constructive communications between Kabul and Islamabad, and is a leading participant in the Friends of Democratic Pakistan. It hosted a trilateral summit on January 25 and a Afghanistan Regional Summit (including all of Afghanistan's immediate neighbors as well as select other countries including the U.S.) on January 26, just prior to the January 28 London Conference on Afghanistan.

11. (C) Turkey pledged significant aid to both countries: USD 200 million to Afghanistan and USD 100 million to Pakistan, as well as USD 1.5 million to the ANA. There are 1750 Turkish troops in Afghanistan, and Turkey has four OMLTs currently in Kabul and, since December, pledged two more OMLTs and one POMLT. Because of its culture, history and religious orientation, as well as Foreign Minister Davutoglu's strategic ambition, Turkey is well disposed to act as an agent of the international community's goals in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2010, Turkey has pledged to offer 6-8 week trainings for up to a brigade's worth of Afghan military and police personnel in Turkey and will establish a training center in Kabul capable of training up to 600 ANSA personnel at a time.

Retrograde through Turkey

12. (S) Turkey's agreement to allow us to use its territory, facilities and airspace has been essential to our ability to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. We now look to expand current capabilities to transit materiel from Iraq to join up with the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to Afghanistan. CENTCOM logisticians, working with us and our EUCOM Office of Defense Cooperation, seek to take advantage of improved commercial ties between Turkey and Iraq to move non-lethal equipment across Turkey to join the NDN. We are working to expand our current retrograde agreements to minimize the time and bureaucracy involved, and to expand

permissions to allow non-lethal military equipment, including armored transport vehicles.

Advocacy for U.S. Defense Industry

¶13. (C) We much appreciate SecDef's help in advocating for U.S. firms competing for key projects in Turkey, and hope he can raise both Sikorsky's and Raytheon's cases in person. Sikorsky's "International Blackhawk" proposal holds remarkable benefits. This deal represents a new level of industrial partnership; Sikorsky guarantees that it would build in Turkey - for sale outside of Turkey - one Blackhawk for each one the GOT builds and buys for itself; this is a boon of hundreds of millions of dollars for the Turkish economy. On Air Defense, Raytheon's PAC-3 is competing in a tender for Turkey's air defense. Raytheon also seeks to take advantage of Turkish industry's ability to co-produce complex systems with us and would produce systems for sale in the UAE and elsewhere. The benefit to Turkey's economy from such co-production would likely exceed USD 1 billion. Technically and operationally, there is no system which can compete with the PAC-3, but Turkey's Defense Ministry seeks to broaden competition to include lower-cost options from Russia and even from European producers. Raytheon often asks us to remind the Turks that a decision on requests for support on Missile Defense should not necessarily affect a decision on PAC-3.

UAV's, Attack Helicopters, and Intel Surge

¶14. (C) Turkey seeks to acquire, on an urgent basis, its own ISR capability to replace the US assets currently being used in anti-PKK operations. President Obama told PM Erdogan in December that we support Turkey's request to acquire armed Reaper UAVs. Nevertheless, approval for armed Reapers is complicated due to Hill concerns. We have explained this to the Turks. However, even if those could be overcome, the delivery pipeline for these systems is long, and Turkey's leaders have sought reassurance that we will not pull our intelligence support until they can replace it. While we are working to enhance Turkey's ISR capabilities, we have not made this commitment to date.

¶15. (C) Bad GOT procurement decisions led Turkey to a severe shortage of dual engine, high altitude attack helicopters, which it desperately needs to fight the PKK. PM Erdogan raised this issue with the President in December 2009; SecDef should expect this issue to be a top priority in meetings with Minister Gonul and with GEN Basbug. The Turks took SecDef's May 2009 letter to provide up to four AH-1W helicopters each in 2011, 2012 and 2013 as a firm commitment, and now have asked us to advance that date to 2010. They do not accept our explanation that these aircraft are simply not available from our inventory, as they believe they have -- just like the U.S. -- "troops in contact" and need the close tactical support. While SecDef should make no commitment, we should also explore whether we can persuade Taiwan to sell or lease some of its own AH-1W aircraft now that Taiwan is taking delivery of Apaches.

Support For The US-Turkey-Iraq "Tripartite Security Dialogue"

¶16. (S) SecDef's visit will take place just as USFI's GEN Odierno will have left. We expect that GEN Odierno's visit will give a political boost to the U.S.-Turkey-Iraq Tripartite Security talks. Turkey's civilian leaders are taking heat from their domestic political opposition for pressing the "Kurdish Opening" while casualties from PKK attacks continue. They hope to use GEN Odierno's visit to show that their whole-of-government approach against PKK insurgency is producing results and that it has the support of senior USG officials in Iraq.

¶17. (S) Trilateral meetings continue regularly and a new Tripartite operational office in Erbil, established to share

counter-PKK intelligence was established over the summer. The most recent tri-lat meeting took place in Baghdad in December, followed by a joint Turkey-Iraq visit in Erbil. The Turks remain frustrated that, in their view, the KRG is not doing enough to combat the PKK. The Turks remain shy in sharing intelligence data; they are not convinced that they

can trust Iraqi/Kurdish individuals to keep information concerning operations secret. Turkish officials have become more strident in their calls for KRG officials to take action against the PKK. The cooperation that does exist is a step in the right direction; however, it will need to improve significantly prior to the U.S. pullout of Iraq. CHOD Basbug and PM Erdogan want the U.S. to put more pressure on the Iraqis - and particularly Masoud Barzani - to take actions to cut PKK supply and logistics lines in northern Iraq. We should stress the need for more trust and collaboration between Turkey and Iraq, eventually on Turkish CBOs. Absent greater cooperation, we could see significant bilateral problems post-2011, to include Iraqi claims of Turkey's violation of its sovereign territory.

Northern Iraq

¶18. (C) Turkey will not consider any alternative to the political unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, but has become more flexible on how it engages "the local authorities of northern Iraq" (how Turkey refers officially to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG)). Turkey's policy remains focused on the government in Baghdad, but its outreach to the KRG is expanding. This outreach is reinforced by the continued dominance of Turkish products and investments in the KRG's healthy economy.

Armenia

¶19. (S) The signing of the Protocols to reestablish Turkish-Armenian relations and open the common border in Zurich on October 10 was a landmark for the region. However, neither Turkey nor Armenia have taken steps toward ratification; the GOT argues that progress toward withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijani provinces surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh is a pre-condition. (Note: This was not/not part of the agreement, and not a position the U.S. supports. End note.) Future relations will nevertheless still be heavily linked to the 1915 "Armenian genocide" issue. Any U.S. determination of the events of 1915 as "genocide" would set off a political firestorm in Turkey, and the effect on our bilateral relationship -- including political, military, and commercial aspects -- would be devastating.

Israel

¶20. (C) While the Foreign Ministry and the Turkish General Staff agree with us that a strong Turkey-Israel relationship is essential for regional stability, PM Erdogan has sought to shore up his domestic right flank through continued populist rhetoric against Israel and its December 2008 Gaza operation. His outburst at Davos and the last-minute cancellation of Israel's participation in the Fall 2009 Anatolian Eagle Exercise (a multilateral Air Force exercise which had US, Turkey, Italy, and Israel as planned participants) were the most noticeable examples of this rhetoric, which we and his staff have sought to contain. The latest incident, a snub in early January of the Turkish Ambassador by Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon, almost caused the GOT to both recall its Ambassador and cancel the visit of Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak. However, the very public row was resolved with an Israeli apology and Barak's visit on January 17 helped to stem the downward spiral for now. Nevertheless, we assess that Erdogan is likely to continue anti-Israel remarks and the issues will continue to cast a shadow on the TU-IS bilateral relationship.

Political Environment

¶21. (C) PM Erdogan's Islamist-leaning Justice and Development (AK) Party remains Turkey's strongest political party, but its poll numbers are slumping, and it continues to fear an erosion of its political base from more conservative/Islamist

parties. Civilian-military relations remain complex. Chief of Staff General Basbug has worked out a modus vivendi with PM Erdogan, but the long-running struggle between Turkey's secularists (with the Army as its champion) and Islamists (represented by the government) naturally puts them at odds. Erdogan has the clear upper hand, a fact with which Basbug has seemingly learned to live. Alleged past military involvement in coup contingency planning or even deliberate generation of internal chaos remains political theme number one and preoccupies both Erdogan and Basbug and their respective underlings. Public trust in the military is starting to decline, the result of several very public on-going investigations into the alleged planning against the government.
Jeffrey

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